Strategic Lessons from ECC to S/4HANA

Redefining Cloud ERP Transformation

Most large enterprises running ECC have not started migration to Cloud ERP, but enough have begun the journey there's key insights to share. Retrospectives and lessons learned from S/4HANA projects are truly valuable – offering the opportunity to learn from other's successes and journeys and making better choices for one's own.

At Avantra, our solutions help manage the complexity of large SAP estates and challenging migrations to Cloud ERP. In interviews and conversations with our customers, we have identified seven key lessons for migrating to S/4HANA, and the challenges and solutions employed for success with S/4HANA and Cloud ERP projects.

The experience provides additional insight on the RISE/Activate Methodology, and pragmatic variations including key areas where Avantra accelerates deliverables, addressing the common hybrid management problem created by incremental migration to Cloud ERP. A surprise may come from the low number of lessons directly related to technology.

Rather, organizational best practices, keen expectations and project management, and diligence in well- documented business impact and value were paramount factors in project success.

> Show the businesses that S/4HANA acts as a catalyst and an opportunity to start the wider transformation journey – no one can dispute the need to modernise in an era of disruption where doing nothing is akin to business suicide.
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> *– Deloitte UK Research*
> (https://www.deloitte.com/uk/en/services/consulting/research/saphana-key-things-to-understand.html)

Set Business Expectations Correctly

Over articulate every detail of expectations! Successful migration projects begin with alignment between the business and IT teams on exactly what to expect and when. Consider the technical upgrade: from a business operations perspective, a successful technical upgrade results in minimal change. When poorly communicated, the upgrade or even technical migration to Cloud ERP becomes a vision of a new system with enhanced capabilities and numerous improvements, only to deliver something much the same as present-day, even when successful!

Yet for many firms, the technical upgrade is the first and most logical step to Cloud ERP, providing the technical foundation for a future of innovation and sustainability with significant advantages over legacy on-premises systems. So, communicate that clearly – it's the foundation, not the pinnacle.

Create Opportunity for Business Value

Every step of the project should create business value, but not every step of a large migration project will directly impact the business.

Technical debt is a reality of complex systems modified over time to provide enhancements and customization for the business. Paying technical debt can be valuable and create opportunity – at the right time.

Use every change investment as an opportunity to better the business for the future. With any technical change, understand the future requirements of the business and plan in conjunction with IT so the activity is more than just solving a technical problem.

The same effort that took us months with the other systems... Within that week we had no false positives, it was all very stable. It just worked beautifully.

– Yohai Rosenbaum, Infrastructure & Information Security Division Manager, Paz Oil

Buy-in from the Business

Major projects will ask sacrifice from the business – time, effort and the opportunity costs of other investments. Large project success depends on business agreement and support of project priorities and target outcomes.

Align all stakeholders: IT, Finance and the Line of Business. Ensure all teams agree with the project goals, how likely outcomes support the business, and the value of this project vs. other opportunities (or consequences!) for the business.

Clear insights into stakeholder reception and experiences throughout the project lifecycle. Usage of the insights gained as the basis for precise actions to speed up and support solution adoption.

SAP

(https://www.sap.com/documents/2025/03)

Don't Forget About Legacy Operations Budgets

The excitement of new systems and the innovation they promise can be distracting – don't forget there's still a business to run today! Large Cloud ERP projects, especially complex, multi-landscape migrations, require years to complete. During the project, business continuity with existing systems is essential. Expect to be in a hybrid operational model for some time, and consider the technical challenges involved.

Budget for legacy operations responsibly, anticipating the transition period could take significantly longer than planned for reasons unforeseeable today. Don't aggressively schedule legacy system retirement or plan new project deliverables using existing operations budgets. Be skeptical of plans to migrate at "zero net cost" – these plans almost always leverage existing ECC operations budgets to fund the project, sometimes with dubious assumptions.

I had one employee spending at least 10 hours every week just maintaining the SAP Solution Manager. Now we don't have to do it at all.

– Alon Senderovitz, CISO, Strauss Group

Strauss

Expect Changes in Scope

It may be tempting to plan for a perfect success on the 1st try ... but don't. Large scale migration projects are notoriously difficult to scope perfectly, and few major projects go live without some mid-project change. In the "worst case" category, there are examples of entire migration budgets consumed by late project blockers missed during initial project discovery.

Adding to the challenge can be the assessment tooling itself: Digital Discovery Assessment isn't perfect or always comprehensive – and outcomes depend on the human inputs subject to human error.

The fit to standard process can be cumbersome and expensive from a human experience perspective – it's often not a technology problem. And, even with perfect planning, the public cloud bill of materials might not be suitable for your project, only to be discovered well into the project, and resulting in a pivot to Private Cloud ERP options.

Data migration issues are a common project blocker, so plan carefully for this part of your project. It's easy to underestimate the challenges of archiving, data segmentation and reducing dataset size before migration to cloud data storage. Many firms deploy change management automation solutions as part of migration tooling.

Change management is a critical part of project management, and while suitable for Cloud ERP, migrations involving extended periods of hybrid options often require solutions with a broader range than Cloud ALM or ChaRM.

Like change management, IT Ops for SAP is another common area of investment for complex projects. Managing the combination of legacy and new Cloud ERP systems during the migration from onpremises through hybrid to cloud presents unique challenges cloud-specific tooling does not address.

The migration to HANA was easier thanks to Avantra. We've used Avantra to monitor our landscape before, during and after the migration... Avantra gives us useful insights into the source and target systems during the HANA migration, even during the SAP downtime phase.

– Rochus Tresch, Head of SAP Development, COOP Group

Clear the Deck Before You Begin

Successful Cloud ERP projects have dedicated teams with clear head-space to focus on project success. They plan on a significant, long-term dedication to the project as a primary activity, transferring existing day-to-day demands to teams focused on running the as-is business.

> *Setting up an Avantra environment—including installation and configuration of three management agents—took about four hours... Adding subsequent systems took only minutes..*

– Olaf Eichkorn, Leader of SAP Basis Team, City of Zurich

Stadt Zürich

Be Selective with Partners

Spend time identifying the right partner for your project. You will be spending considerable time and money with them. They should have industry and solution experience in your specific space. Most SIs and consultancies leverage standard SAP methodologies tailored with their own experience, expertise and domain knowledge. This is where industry-specific knowledge is critical.

For any given individual business, these tailored approaches can be better or worse – evaluate carefully for your specific requirements. For Public Cloud ERP, evaluate the methodology with extra care since these platforms are more standardized than private cloud: the intersection of requirements, methodology, plan and technology should be a near perfect overlap for your business.

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> *Avantra always has your back and someone will always be there to provide you a solution. It is a support level I have never seen with another product.*

– Yohai Rosenbaum, Infrastructure & Information Security Division Manager, Paz Oil

PAZ

Now You're Really Running: Go Forth and Migrate With Control, Clarity and Confidence.

Avantra customers are the best prepared large enterprises for successful S/4HANA migrations. In addition to meticulous preparation, Avantra customers have the advantages of AI Ops for SAP on their side: a solution for managing the operations of SAP anywhere it runs, on-premises, in the cloud, or with hybrid application during transition projects.

Do you have what you need to automate and manage SAP operations from a single point of control across on-premises, hybrid and cloud deployments? Ensure the success of your migration project with observability and automation solutions for SAP.

> For more information on SAP Ops and solutions for managing a complex mix of on-prem, hybrid and Cloud ERP, speak with one of our experts to find out how Avantra can transform your SAP operations and Cloud ERP projects.

AVANTRA

Now you're *really* running.

[Get started with Avantra](#) and take control of your Cloud ERP journey.

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